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ABSTRACT

This document presents a strategy that sets a direction for governments, industry, and training providers to address women's needs consistently as a priority in policy making, planning, resourcing, implementing, and monitoring vocational education and training (VET). Section 1 is an overview of Australia's National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy, its framework, goal, and accountability. Section 2 discusses the context for the strategy and its purpose. Section 3 describes those involved: women, VET providers, industry, government, schools, Industry Training Advisory Bodies, and trade unions. Section 4 lists four outcomes of the strategy: increase in number of women completing VET programs; increased number of women with VET qualifications at all levels; women distributed more broadly across fields of study; and increased participation and improved outcomes for specific groups of women. Section 5 discusses outcome achievement through strategic intervention in seven focus areas: continuous improvement measures; training and staff development; competency standards, curriculum, and delivery; pathway planning; balanced representation; promotion; and research. Section 6 focuses on strategy implementation and provides an implementation framework that correlates organization with mechanism and role. Section 7 addresses how success will be determined. Key performance indicators are related to outcomes, and reporting processes are described. (YLB)

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National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy

A NATIONAL
PROJECT OF THE
AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL TRAINING
AUTHORITY UNDER
THE AUSPICES OF
THE MCEETYA VEET
WOMEN'S
TASKFORCE

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National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy

March 1996



A national project of the Australian National Training Authority
Under the auspices of the MCEETYA VEET Women's Taskforce



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NATIONAL TRAINING
AUTHORITY

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Women in Vocational Education and Training - A National Strategy

Foreword

Australia's vocational education and training system aims to:

- *provide an educated, skilled and flexible workforce to enable Australian industry to be competitive in domestic and international markets;*
- *improve the knowledge, skills and quality of life for Australians, having regard to the particular needs of disadvantaged groups.*

This mission statement will be fulfilled in cooperation with other education sectors, industry and those seeking vocational education and training.

(Mission statement agreed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers)

In order for the mission to be achieved, vocational education and training must be designed and delivered in a manner that encourages all Australians to participate.

The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy sits under the umbrella of the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training*¹ which establishes a framework for a quality vocational and education system that is responsive, accessible and efficient. A new National Strategy for VET is currently being developed which is anticipated to be in place by December 1996. The document acknowledges that women are among the groups whose

"needs have not always been identified or always incorporated into vocational education and training programs and delivery".

The ability of women to contribute to a skilled workforce and productive economy will be fostered by a system of vocational education and training that facilitates their access and participation on all levels.

The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy ('the Strategy') sets a direction for governments, industry and training providers to ensure that the needs of women are consistently addressed as a priority in policy making, planning, resourcing, implementing and monitoring vocational education and training.

Action will be undertaken to implement the Strategy at national, state/territory and training provider levels through policy, planning and project initiatives.

¹ *Towards a Skilled Australia - a National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers in November 1994.

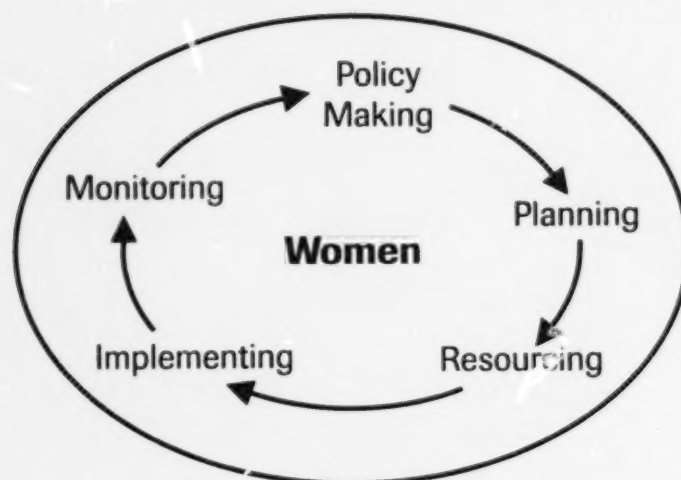
Jane Diplock
Chair MCEETYA VEET Women's Taskforce
Director - General DTEC NSW

One

Overview of the National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy ('the Strategy')

Overview 1: Strategy Framework

Equity Considered at all Levels of Decision Making in the Vocational Education and Training System



for all women accessing vocational education and training including...

Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Women

Women with a
Disability

Rural and Isolated
Women

Women from non-
English Speaking
Backgrounds

Women in Transition
and Other Special
Groups

Overview 2 - Strategy Goal

A measurable change in the profile of women accessing and completing programs of Vocational Education and Training

Focus Areas

- Continuous improvement measures
- Training and Staff Development
- Standards, Curriculum and Delivery
- Pathway Planning
- Balanced Representation
- Promotion
- Research

Outcomes

- increase in number of women completing VET programs;
- increase in number of women with VET qualifications at all levels;
- women distributed more broadly across fields of study;
- increase in participation and improved outcomes for specific groups of women.

Towards...

Change in employment profile of women

- higher number of women in management positions;
- broader distribution of women across industries at various levels.

Priority Industries

All industry but in particular...

- Industries where women are a high percentage of the workforce
- Growth industries where women are a low percentage of the workforce
- Currently emerging industries

Overview 3: Strategy Accountability

The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy is...

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Endorsed by | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers |
| Overseen by | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian National Training Authority• Vocational Education, Employment and Training (VEET) Women's Taskforce |
| Implemented by | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• States and Territories through State Training Agency action plans• National Staff Development Committee• Standards and Curriculum Council• Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics• Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training• Industry Training Advisory Bodies• Providers of Vocational Education and Training |
| Reported through | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Training Profiles• Annual Report of Australian National Training Authority• Annual Report on the National Women's VET Strategy. |

Two

Why a National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy?

2.1 Context

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector is a major force in providing the skills needed to take Australia's economy into the next century. As women make up an increasing share of the workforce, it is essential that they are in a position to develop their skills and contribute to economic development. Australian society will benefit economically and socially from dynamic training systems and labour markets that respond to needs and provide informed choice.

The role of women in the community, the workforce and education is changing rapidly.² The percentage of women (15 - 64 years) who participate in the workforce has increased from 45.7% in 1982 to 53% in 1995.³ Women constitute 43% of the workforce and 75% of part-time workers. In education, retention of female students to the end of Year 12 at 80% is significantly higher than the male rate of 70%. The number of women in Higher Education has risen to 53.6% of the student population.⁴ The Adult and Community Education sector has also witnessed growth and it is estimated that 75% of its students are women.⁵

Women's increased participation in education has not been reflected in the VET sector. Despite some gains, a decline in female enrolments relative to male enrolments in recent years has been of concern. In 1994, women made up 44.8 % of vocational enrolments. This figure has declined since a high of 47.1% in 1989.⁶ In addition, women are still concentrated in a narrow range of vocational programs and are employed in a far smaller number of occupations and industries than men.

The long-standing emphasis in Australian vocational education and training on trade and technical education has not been inclusive of women. Training has not been provided in a manner that has succeeded in encouraging women to participate. There is a societal expectation that women have primary responsibility for the role of care (child, aged and disability care) and the needs of carers must be addressed to allow women to benefit from vocational education and training. Community and industry attitudes have maintained a position of restricting occupational and study choice along gender lines. To maximise the talents of the Australian workforce, these artificial barriers must be removed.

In the 1990's, governments, industry and unions have endorsed a major training reform program that includes the shift from the traditional reliance on TAFE towards a national, more diverse Vocational Education and Training system. The implementation of a national qualifications system, competency based training and the National Vocational Education and Training System are among the features that have brought significant change. As the system becomes embedded, a strategy is required to ensure that priority is given to women's access, participation and successful outcomes.

The *National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE* was in place between 1991 and 1994. Although major changes were occurring in the VET sector at the time, the plan succeeded in addressing many of the entrenched barriers to women's participation in TAFE. The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy builds on this work and that of other projects and extends action to the wider VET sector. The Strategy is supported by the companion document, *The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy - an implementation guide*.

² The national workshop considered a wider range of contextual issues. These are summarised in an Issues Scan in Section 4.1 of the support document - *National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy - an implementation guide*

³ ABS 1995, Catalogue 4124.0

⁴ Education figures for 1994, ABS 1995, Catalogue 4124.0

⁵ NSW Board of Adult and Community Education, 1995. Reliable national figures are not available but this comprehensive NSW research is indicative of national trends

⁶ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Selected Vocational Education and Training Statistics 1994*.

2.2 Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy sets a national direction for governments, industry and providers of vocational education and training. It aims to ensure a focus on women as a major client group for the period of the Strategy, 1996 - 1999, and beyond.

The Strategy highlights the impact on women of policy making, planning, resourcing, implementing and monitoring within the VET system. The Strategy aims to improve women's access to and outcomes from VET. As a result of the Strategy there should be:

A measurable change in the profile of women accessing and completing programs of Vocational Education and Training.

There should be a higher number of women from diverse backgrounds with VET qualifications at various levels, across a broader range of fields of study and industry areas participating in work related to the training they have received. This should lead to a shift in the employment patterns of women.

The specific outcomes of the Strategy are outlined in Section 4.

Three

Who Does the Strategy Involve?

Women

The Strategy has been developed following consultation with a wide range of organisations across Australia. Its successful implementation will depend on the synergy of efforts of this wide range of organisations and individuals across Australia.

The Strategy relates to women who are in or are potentially in VET including employed women and those not currently in paid work. The barriers to women's equal participation in vocational education and training and employment have been documented through projects such as the *National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE*, the *Women's Entry Level Training Project and Different Futures*.⁷ Family responsibilities, interrupted employment patterns, harassment in the workplace and/or in training, concentration in part-time work and in a narrow range of occupations and industries are some of the key issues facing women in education, training and employment.

Many women face additional barriers to participation. The Strategy recognises the following groups as priorities.

(i) Women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)

Changes in occupations, the workforce and industry restructuring are exacerbating the traditional barriers to participating in VET for women whose first language is not English. Research shows that labour force participation of people from non-English speaking backgrounds has declined during the 1990s and these women receive less vocational training on or off the job than any other group.⁸ The Strategy recognises the variation of need within the broad group of non-English speaking background women and particularly the needs of refugee and recently arrived women who are not fluent speakers of English.

(ii) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Fewer than 12% of indigenous women have a post-school qualification compared with 34% of all women. Some progress has been achieved in increasing the participation of indigenous women in VET particularly the younger age groups.⁹ These efforts need to intensify for mature aged indigenous women who are less well represented. In 1994, over 30% of indigenous women who had left school were reported as wishing to do further study or training but were unable to do so principally for childcare and financial reasons.¹⁰

(iii) Women with a disability

The *National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE* recognised women with disabilities as facing particular issues in participating in education and training. There are continuing reports of difficulties such as physical access, lack of appropriate support services and cost in participating in VET. Under the Disability Discrimination Act, training providers are required to make at least 'reasonable adjustment' to address the needs of people with disabilities. Reasonable adjustment includes provision of equipment, physical access, curriculum design and delivery and assessment.

(iv) Rural and Isolated Women

Distance, cost and accommodation are among the many issues confronting rural and isolated women accessing and participating in VET. Restructuring of the economy and the agricultural sector require new and increased levels of skills in rural and remote areas. The critical needs are to facilitate recognition of existing skills and access to accredited training programs. Agriculture is recognised as a priority industry in the Strategy.

⁷ The support document *National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy - an implementation guide* contains a full reference list.

⁸ Bertone, S. 1995. *Training for What? Non-English Background Women and the National Training Reform Agenda*

⁹ Tranby, 1994

¹⁰ ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, 1994

(v) Women in Transition and Other Special Groups

The decision to access VET is often made by women in a time of transition. This may occur from school to work or in a return to study and work following a period of caring for children and family or mature women entering the workforce for the first time or after a substantial break. The Strategy also recognises factors such as sole parenting, literacy, unemployment or periods of imprisonment. Some of these factors may emerge as a priority during the life of the Strategy. Systems and training providers need to develop strategies and actions appropriate to the needs of their particular female population.

The Strategy acknowledges the complexity within the specific groups and the multiple barriers to educational participation experienced by some women. Organisations representing women's interests provide an important link in communicating the Strategy to women and their communities.

Providers of Vocational Education and Training

The Strategy relates to government funded provision of vocational education and training, both off- the-job and on-the-job.

Vocational education and training refers to education and training that leads to a vocational or work outcome. It is delivered in a range of settings including the workplace, TAFE colleges and institutes, secondary schools, privately owned training institutions, community based organisations and other providers of government funded vocational education and training. This includes the Adult Migrant English Program and government supported adult and community education.

The Strategy involves employees in the VET sector including teachers, trainers and administrators.

Industry

Industry must be a partner with the VET system if the Strategy is to succeed. Industry generates demand for VET and influences the profile of that demand through its recruitment, employment and training practices. Industry is providing increasing amounts of workplace training and assessment.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with industry associations. They will support the implementation of the Strategy in priority industries and advise VET providers of industry trends. Within industry, workplace trainers and assessors and Group Training Companies will have important roles in facilitating successful access and participation of women and female trainees to training and employment opportunities.

The Strategy aims to encourage women into industries and occupations that have prospects of employment growth and career progression. The VET system must ensure that it is expending efforts across a wide range of industries including those in which women represent a high percentage of the workforce. Resource allocation across industry areas and their related fields of study will underpin the success of the Strategy. Opportunities must be provided so that women can participate in emerging and growth industries. Curriculum development for these industries needs to be inclusive of women.

Industries that are priorities for action are:

- (i) Industries where women are a high percentage of the workforce.

These include health and community services (77%), education (68%), accommodation and restaurants (57%).¹¹ As these industries are forecast to grow it will be important to ensure that women are represented across all occupations and sectors;

- (ii) Growth Industries (in employment) where women are a low percentage of the workforce. These include construction, agriculture and wholesale.

Industry	Growth to year 2005 ¹²	% of workforce that is female
Construction	2.4%	14%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	2.5%	30%
Wholesale	4% (includes retail)	31%

- (iii) Currently Emerging Industries.

These industries include information technology and a focus on emerging work patterns such as telecommuting and self-employment.

Government

All Commonwealth, State and Territory governments will be involved in implementing the Strategy. The Strategy is endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The Australian National Training Authority will oversee the Strategy at a national level. State Training Agencies will implement the Strategy through their own action plans.

Schools

The decision by young women to access VET is strongly influenced by both family expectations and the schooling system. Schools influence young women's decisions about VET by both the career counselling provided and the values which schools promote formally and informally. This influence begins in early childhood. Schools are a party to the Strategy as providers of VET and will be assisted in linking the Strategy to their gender equity plans. Schools as part of their local communities, have a role in shaping community attitudes.

Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs)

As tripartite bodies representing industry, unions and government, ITABs are a key link between industry and VET. Research indicates that mainstreaming gender issues is more common in public sector employers.¹³ By making the private sector aware of the benefits of removing artificial barriers in employment and training, ITABs can influence industry to encourage women's participation in VET.

Trade Unions

Trade Unions will have a role in implementing the Strategy through their membership of Industry Training Advisory Bodies, in communicating the Strategy to their members and helping to foster a work environment that is positive for women. Unions have a significant role in ensuring that family agenda issues are part of the enterprise bargaining process in Australia.

¹¹ ABS Labour Market survey, November 1995

¹² DEET, 1995, *Australia's Workforce 2005: jobs in the future*

¹³ DEET, 1995, Evaluation of the AVTS Pilot Phase 1993, 1994.

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Outcomes of the Strategy

The Strategy aims to achieve outcomes that are attainable and measurable.

Outcome 1

— Increase in the number of women completing VET programs

The Strategy aims to stimulate demand for VET by women. Strategies are required to gain an increase in enrolments of women in VET and to provide a system that is supportive of women in completing modules and courses. Although evidence is imprecise, it appears that women are less likely to complete VET programs than men. In 1994, women withdrew from programs of study for reasons other than failure, at a higher rate than men.¹⁴

Outcome 2

— Increase in the number of women with VET qualifications at all levels

The Strategy seeks an increase in the number of women with VET qualifications and an increase in the number of women with higher level VET qualifications. In TAFE women are concentrated in non-trade related and non-accredited training and overrepresented in preparatory and access courses.¹⁵ Women as a proportion of enrolments in advanced trade and technician skills courses declined from 37% in 1988 to 31% in 1993.¹⁶ Across the community, 34% of Australian women have post-school qualifications compared with 43% of men, with greater differences occurring in older age groups.¹⁷ The VET sector, with more flexible entry requirements than higher education, is well placed to address this imbalance.

Outcome 3

— Women distributed more broadly across fields of study

Distinct gender segmentation marks the fields of study within VET. Women are overrepresented in Health and Community Services, Education, Art, Humanities and Social Science and underrepresented in Architecture and Building, Engineering and Surveying.¹⁸ The Strategy aims to broaden perceptions of women, industry and VET providers and facilitate real study and career choice for women. This is to be emphasised in emerging occupations and related training so that gender based segmentation does not develop.

¹⁴ Based on module result category 10 - In 1994, 295,617 male enrolments and 307,756 female enrolments 'withdrew without failure' out of total 3,361,203 and 2,889,879 respectively - source NCVER, 1995.

¹⁵ NCVER, 1995.

¹⁶ ABS, 1995.

¹⁷ ABS, 1995 - note a change in the way this percentage is calculated from 1994 means that it cannot be compared with previous years.

¹⁸ NCVER, 1995.

Outcome 4

— Increase in participation and improved outcomes for specific groups of women

The Strategy aims to achieve an increase in the number of enrolments and completions across the qualification levels and fields of study for all women. Some women face particular barriers that require strategies to bring about positive change. These include women from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability and rural and isolated women. The needs of these groups are well documented, particularly through the *National Plan of Action for Women*. Improvements in data collection in VET will facilitate more precise monitoring of progress and the Strategy will complement other policies, strategies and projects aimed at improving the outcomes of specific groups. The needs of the groups are addressed in the seven focus areas of the Strategy and in more detail in the support document *The National Strategy for Women in Vocational Education and Training - an implementation guide*.

Employment Outcomes

VET must be considered in the context of economic development and employment. Achievement of the outcomes in VET will lead to a positive change in the employment profile of women, specifically:

- higher number of women in management positions

Women are underrepresented in management ranks in Australia in government and industry and change is slow.¹⁹ In industries where women are dominant in number such as health and community services, they are still underrepresented in management roles. In industry overall, only 6% of women are in management or administrator roles compared with 30% who are clerks and 24% who are sales and personal service workers.²⁰

- broader distribution of women across industries at various levels.

Women constitute 42% of the workforce but are concentrated in a narrow range of industries. They represent three quarters of the health and community workforce, two thirds of workers in education but only 14% of construction workers. Within industries, women are clustered in lower paid occupations. Women's full time earnings in 1994 were 82% of the male level.²¹

¹⁹ (Karpin) Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management, 1995, *Enterprising Nation*.

²⁰ ABS, 1995, Cat 4124.0

²¹ ABS, 1995, Cat 4124.0

Five

How will the Outcomes be Achieved?

The outcomes will be achieved by strategic intervention in areas of the VET system.

Continuous Improvement Measures	Training and Staff Development	Competency Standards, Curriculum and Delivery	Pathway Planning	Balanced Representation	Promotion	Research
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Seven focus areas have been agreed to by the key players in VET for women, as forming the framework for action.

More detailed discussion of the focus areas and related issues are outlined in the support document, *The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy - an implementation guide*.

1. Continuous Improvement Measures

The VET sector has moved increasingly towards setting goals as a means of giving direction and measuring progress. 'Continuous improvement measures' refers to the process of noting the current position (benchmarking) and establishing numeric goals. Goals should be set in consultation with those whom they affect and allowance made for state, regional and local differences. They need to be incremental so that they reflect change and reward effort.

Each State and Territory system is to establish the benchmarks of current performance in relation to women in VET and measure progress. Benchmarks can be established on several levels in line with the outcomes and priorities of the Strategy:

- qualifications attained;
- enrolments and completions across fields of study;
- resource allocation across industry sectors;
- progress of specific groups.

In the first phase of the Strategy, the Australian National Training Authority will be identifying best practice in relation to VET for women and specific groups of women. Models demonstrating effective strategies will be developed and funds will be available for training providers, including industry and group training companies, to increase training outcomes.

Strategies:

- 1.1 State Training Agencies to develop equitable resource allocation models with particular measures for industry areas where women are a high percentage of the workforce;
- 1.2 VEET Women's Taskforce to monitor resource allocation, particularly growth funds, in line with projected growth industries and opportunities for women;
- 1.3 The Australian National Training Authority and State Training Agencies to

consult with providers and representative agencies to identify best practice. Fund training places with training providers NETTFORCE companies, ITABs, industry and Group Training Companies for women and in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, rural and isolated women, women in transition and women with a disability;

- 1.4 State Training Agencies and Australian National Training Authority to strengthen equity requirements in funding agreements;
- 1.5 State Training Agencies to set benchmarks and goals through state level action plans and report plans and progress to achieve these through the State Training Profiles.

2. Training and Staff Development

The skill of personnel in the VET sector and their approach to gender issues underpins the success of the Strategy. Supportive learning environments free of harassment are critical to successful completion of programs and encouragement of women into broader fields of study.

Professional development is to be provided for administrators, curriculum developers, assessors, teachers and trainers. The Strategy will extend staff development to workplace trainers and assessors and personnel in Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs). This should result in a clearer understanding at many levels in the VET sector of the nature of 'inclusive' training and gender issues.

Projects will be developed in consultation with the ANTA National Staff Development Committee (NSDC). Approaches to staff development are to focus on the priority industries nominated in the Strategy and use existing resources such as the NSDC 'Gender Inclusive Training Kit'.

Strategies:

- 2.1 Provide staff development on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women in transition, rural and isolated women and women with a disability;
- 2.2 Provide staff development programs that focus on gender inclusive teaching strategies to be delivered to cross-section of staff in VET;
- 2.3 State Training Agencies and NSDC to provide appropriate training programs and support ITABs and workplace trainers;
- 2.4 Provide staff development for workplace assessors and off-the-job assessors that focuses on needs of women and specific groups;
- 2.5 Focus staff development and return to industry programs (aimed at updating teachers' workplace skills and knowledge) on emerging industries and growth industries where women are in low numbers;
- 2.6 Highlight the role of English language and literacy and numeracy as factors in successful completion of VET programs;
- 2.7 State Training Agencies to benchmark current levels of staff development related to gender equity and monitor progress.

3. Competency Standards Development, Curriculum and Delivery

The content, structure, location and timing of courses affects the rate of course take-up by women. Women's needs should be considered at each of the stages in developing and delivering VET programs. This commences with the allocation of resources to industry sectors and moves through the development of competency standards, curriculum and delivery of programs.

The availability of quality support services will also influence the completion of courses. Childcare is the key support issue in providing access for women to VET. Appropriate and affordable childcare is particularly needed for women from underrepresented groups.

Current efforts within VET to make training more flexible in terms of structure, timing and location of courses should enhance participation opportunities for women. A range of support services that are already in place need to be expanded and made readily available to facilitate access and completion. The Australian National Training Authority through the Standards and Curriculum Council will provide funds for curriculum projects that will include consultation to determine needs.

Strategies

- 3.1 Standards and Curriculum Council, National Staff Development Committee, ITABs and Training Providers to continue to consult with women and specific groups about effective approaches to competency standards development, curriculum assessment and training delivery to ensure sound access and equity outcomes;
- 3.2 Standards and Curriculum Council to compile information regarding women's involvement in development of industry competency standards either through steering committee representation or through the consultation process;
- 3.3 Standards and Curriculum Council to compile information on gender breakdown by workforce coverage for standards development and utilise this information to ensure equity in the development of standards;
- 3.4 Training providers to maximise opportunities developed through alternative and flexible delivery initiatives. Particular attention to meeting needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with a disability, women in transition and rural and isolated women;
- 3.5 State Training Agencies to investigate expansion of support services that will facilitate higher access and completion rates including the needs of people with childcare and other caring responsibilities.

4. Pathway Planning

Women enter and re-enter education and work at critical phases of their lives. Many women are sole parents or have primary carer roles. The VET system needs flexibility to cater to their needs. Women's decisions will be based on knowledge of available pathways and it is essential that opportunities are not limited by traditional stereotyping.

Young women making the transition from school to work and or further education have choices that are determined by a host of social, economic and educational pressures. Young women have high levels of unemployment and non-participation in education and training. Through entry level training and labour market programs young women have flexibility in combining education, training and work. It is essential that these pathways recognise gender issues.

A decline in the percentage of enrolment rates of mature women in VET during the 1990s is of concern.²² Women returning to education or work following a period of childrearing or caring will make choices from available options that suit their circumstances. For many women this will be part-time work or small business. It is essential that industry and the VET system provide opportunities for women in part-time work to upgrade their skills. This includes providing sensitive support for women who have not participated in formal education or employment for many years.

The recognition of previous learning, skills and training is a critical factor for women who have careers interrupted by caring responsibilities. Women gain skills through a variety of sources including the workplace, unpaid work, labour market programs, adult and community education and work and study outside Australia. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a formal mechanism that makes a link to accredited training. Many women report barriers to the effective use of RPL such as lack of information and cost.²³ Practices in the use of RPL need to be better communicated, more consistent and more sensitive to client needs. Training providers need to inform women about ways of having their existing skills recognised so they can enter VET programs at appropriate levels. Recognition of skills is critical for the access of underrepresented groups.

Strategies

- 4.1 Involve schools, parents and local communities in supporting young women in their choice of school/VET pathways;
- 4.2 The Commonwealth and States to monitor development of entry level training reform and Labour Market Programs for gender segmentation;
- 4.3 Training providers to offer flexible training delivery modes and RPL, particularly in relation to women in part-time work and small business;
- 4.4 State Training Agencies and the Commonwealth, through the ANTA processes, to examine and develop improved RPL processes and increasing usage;
- 4.5 State Training Agencies and training providers to develop profiles of who is benefiting from RPL. The profiles to refer to women from non-English speaking backgrounds, rural and isolated women, women in transition, women with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women;
- 4.6 State Training Agencies to provide support to providers of non-accredited training (such as adult and community education) to increase the amount of accredited training and advise women of credit transfer opportunities;
- 4.7 Support use of Key Competencies as means of identifying skills.

5. Balanced Representation

Greater women's input into decision making in the VET system will increase the relevance of these decisions to women. Women are underrepresented in Competency Standards Bodies, Industry Training Advisory bodies, State Training Agencies and other forums in which VET decisions are made. Women are also underrepresented in organisations designed to boost employment and economic development which impacts on VET.

The VET sector and industry will be positively influenced towards the achievement of the Strategy's outcomes through increasing the number of women who can communicate the implications of VET decisions on women. ANTA, Commonwealth, States and Territories will work jointly to implement strategies.

²² Barnett, Foyster, Werner, 1995. *Patterns of Participation in TAFE - a gender focussed analysis*

²³ Mawer G and Field, L. *One Size Fits Some - competency based training and NESB people*

Strategies

- 5.1 Develop profile of women in the VET decision making roles and highlight gaps;
- 5.2 Provide professional development and support to organisations to increase their level of effective female representation;
- 5.3 Provide support such as mentoring for women, particularly for those in specific groups, to be effective representatives on:
 - Boards in the VET sector eg Industry Training Advisory Boards, Competency Standards Bodies;
 - local and regional economic development organisations;
- 5.4 Work with organisations implementing findings of the Karpin Report²⁴ to ensure maximum opportunities for women to enter management roles.

6. Promotion

Attitudes regarding women's participation in VET, their study and career choices are strongly influenced by available information and images. Communication is required to influence industry, the community, women and the VET sector. A change in the front-end recruitment practices of employers will require the involvement of industry in the promotion process.

The Australian National Training Authority will provide funds to implement promotional strategies. Strategies will use a range of approaches and media, both traditional and non-traditional. A variety of settings for communicating with women will be used such as community facilities and places connected with work and training and informal learning.

Strategies

- 6.1 Involve Industry Training Advisory Bodies, industry associations and unions in developing and distributing information about the benefits of training and employing women;
- 6.2 Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with a disability, women in transition, rural and isolated women re optimum form, content and distribution of information to meet their needs;
- 6.3 Inform women about vocational education and training, including pathways, recognition of prior learning, advantages of accredited training, support services;
- 6.4 Inform VET providers and trainers, schools and community about best practice for women in VET;
- 6.5 Highlight gender as an issue in the National Vocational Education and Training system marketing strategy;
- 6.6 Evaluate effectiveness of promotional strategies.

²⁴ (Karpin) Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management, 1995. *Enterprising Nation*

7. Research

Research to support and direct the Strategy will be required. The Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics and the Research Advisory Council of the Australian National Training Authority will address the issues outlined in the Strategy and consult regarding research priorities. Research needs will be identified as the Strategy proceeds and will be linked to the performance indicators and indicators of improvement.

Strategies:

- 7.1 Identify gaps in data collection;
- 7.2 Use existing data collection to track positive and negative movements of women and specific groups in VET at various levels;
- 7.3 Research reasons for pathway choices of women and particularly young women;
- 7.4 Undertake qualitative and quantitative analysis of women's access and outcomes;
- 7.5 Provide case studies and analysis of strategies to increase number of women in management.

Summary of the Focus Areas and Strategies

Focus Outcome	Continuous Improvement Measures	Training and Staff Development	Competency Standards, Curriculum and Delivery	Pathway Planning	Balanced Representation	Promotion	Research
Increase in number of women completing VET programs	Set benchmarks and goals Identify best practice, fund training places Develop equitable resource allocation and monitor	Provide staff development in gender inclusive teaching, assessment that is sensitive to needs Benchmark current staff development re gender	Maximise use of flexible delivery Expand support services Consult with women, industry re standards, curriculum and training as it affects women	Involve schools, community in supporting young women in pathway choices Provide sensitive support to women returning to training Design, offer flexible delivery, RPL to part-time workers, small business	Provide support to organisations to increase level of female representation	Highlight gender as issue in AVTS marketing Promote VET to women Involve industry in promotion to industry Promote best practice	Track positive and negative movements Undertake qualitative analysis- of women's outcomes- of participation in VET and pathways of young women
Increase in number of women with VET qualifications at all levels	Set benchmarks and goals Identify best practice, fund training places	Provide staff development in gender inclusive teaching, assessment that is sensitive to needs Benchmark current staff development re gender	Maximise use of flexible delivery Expand support services Consult with women, industry re standards, curriculum, training	Support accredited training, credit transfer Improve RPL processes, develop RPL profile	Work with appropriate agencies to implement Karpin recommendations	Promote VET to women Involve industry in promotion to industry Promote best practice	Track positive and negative movements Undertake quantitative and qualitative analysis women's qualifications from VET
Women distributed more broadly across fields of study	Set benchmarks and goals Develop equitable resource allocation and monitor Identify best practice, fund training places	Provide staff development in - gender inclusive teaching, - assessment sensitive to needs - emerging and growth industries Benchmark current staff development Support ITABs, workplace trainers	Consult with women, industry re standards, curriculum and training as it affects women	Monitor AVTS, labour market programs re gender segmentation Support accredited training, credit transfer Involve schools, community in supporting young women in pathway choices	Provide support to organisations to increase level of female representation	Promote VET to women Involve industry in promotion to industry Promote best practice	Track movements of women across fields of study Undertake qualitative analysis - women's outcomes - women's access to VET and women's transition to study and work

20 Summary of the Focus Areas and Strategies (cont'd)

Focus Outcome	Continuous Improvement Measures	Training and Staff Development	Competency Standards, Curriculum and Delivery	Pathway Planning	Balanced Representation	Promotion	Research
Increase in participation and improved outcomes for women from specific groups- NESB, Indigenous, rural/isolated, with disability, in transition	Set benchmarks and goals Identify best practice, fund training places	Provide staff development on needs of specific groups Provide staff development in assessment that is sensitive to needs	Consult groups re standards, curriculum and training needs and delivery Maximise use of flexible delivery Expand support services	Support use of key competencies for identifying skills Support credit transfer, accredited training Improve RPL processes, develop RPL profile	Provide support for women in specific groups in effective representation Provide support for organisations to increase level of specific group representation	Promote VET to women Consult specific groups re appropriate information and media Promote best practice	Track movements of women from specific groups in VET at various levels Undertake quantitative and qualitative analysis of outcomes for women from specific groups
Higher number of women in management	Set benchmarks and goals	Staff development in workplace assessment that is sensitive to needs Staff devt. and support for ITABs and workplace trainers	Maximise use of flexible delivery Expand support services	Design, offer flexible delivery and RPL to women in part-time work and small business	Work with appropriate agencies to implement Karpin recommendations Identify opportunities for increasing representation and highlight gaps	Promote VET to women Promote best practice	Undertake analysis of women's participation in management Undertake case studies and analysis of strategies to increase number of women in management
Broader distribution of women across industries at various levels	Develop equitable resource allocation and monitor	Staff devt. and support for ITABs and workplace trainers Staff development in workplace assessment that is sensitive to needs	Consult with industry re standards, curriculum and training as it affects women Develop information regarding women's involvement in standards development	Monitor AVTS and labour market programs for gender segmentation Offer flexible delivery, RPL and credit transfer	Provide support to organisations to increase level of female representation	Promote VET to women Consult specific groups re appropriate information and media Promote best practice	Undertake qualitative research re pathway choices Undertake analysis of women's employment at various levels

How will the Strategy be Implemented?

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with people and organisations in all States and Territories and the Commonwealth. As a national strategy, it is designed to guide implementation at the State and local level. Each State and Territory will develop an action plan with more detailed strategies and timeframes.

In line with the existing, and the proposed new *National Vocational Education and Training Strategy*, implementation will occur through existing organisations and mechanisms. The Strategy will complement related policies and strategies to avoid conflict and duplication of effort.

Key Organisations

The Strategy is endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) will oversee the Strategy at the national level. The ANTA Board will ensure that the major committees of ANTA include the Strategy as part of their Work and Finance Plans. These committees are the National Staff Development Committee, the Standards and Curriculum Council and the Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics. The VEET Women's Taskforce will monitor the implementation and reporting of the Strategy.

The State Training Agencies will use the Strategy as a framework to guide action. Each State and Territory will develop an action plan with identified agencies, personnel and timeframes to suit their needs. State Training Agencies will consult with state departments of employment regarding appropriate roles and responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs will also use the Strategy as a framework to guide action in relation to relevant programs and activities within its jurisdiction including labour market programs.

Providers of government funded VET will be responsible for implementing the Strategy at local levels. Providers include workplace trainers, TAFE colleges and institutes, secondary schools, privately owned training institutions, community based organisations and other providers of government funded vocational education and training. This includes the Adult Migrant English Program and government supported adult and community education. Suggestions for action are included in *The National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy - an implementation guide*.

Industry Training Advisory Bodies will provide the link between industry and VET providers and will be important in communicating and facilitating the Strategy.

Related Organisations

The VEET Women's Taskforce will liaise with agencies directly responsible for implementing the Strategy and with a wider support structure that will disseminate information, consult with industry, the VET sector and women. Organisations that will be involved include:

- Industry organisations, employer groups and peak bodies;
- Trade unions;
- Target group peak bodies;
- Women's groups;
- Commonwealth and State departments of industrial relations;
- Commonwealth and State departments of economic development.

Implementation Framework

Organisation	Mechanism	Role
Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)	Performance agreements National Industry Training Plans State Training Profiles Funded National Projects	Oversee implementation at national level • monitor state progress through State Training Profiles • monitor changes through National ITAB VET Plans • ANTA Board to ensure implementation of Strategy through ANTA committees • oversee funded national projects
ANTA Committees	Work and Finance Plans	Include Strategy as a priority in Work and Finance Plans
National Staff Development Committee	Input to National VET Report	
Standards and Curriculum Council	Input to National Report on Women in VET	Consult regarding methods of implementation, funded projects
Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics		
State Training Agencies	State Action Plan State Training Profile Input to National VET Report Input to National Women's VET Strategy Report	Oversee implementation at state level • develop action plans - nominate personnel • identify resources • consult with departments of employment • evaluate at state level • report to ANTA via state training profile

Implementation Framework

Organisation	Mechanism	Role
Training Providers receiving government funds	Tendering documentation Performance agreements / contracts Input to State Training Profile	Establish benchmarks and goals for female participation Develop implementation plans Report progress
Schools	Performance agreements /contract for VET funds Gender Equity Plans	Communicate Strategy Encourage girls to consider a wide range of careers and to aspire to higher level VET courses Facilitate transition from school for young women
State Industry Training Advisory Bodies	Performance Agreements Input to State Training Profile / state industry plans / National Industry Training Advisory Bodies Tendering documentation	Strengthen current efforts towards raising women's participation Benchmark current levels of women's participation and set goals
National Industry Training Advisory Bodies	Input to National Industry Vocational Education and Training Plans	Strengthen current efforts towards raising women's participation
Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training	Action plan	Framework to guide action in relevant programs
VEET Women's Taskforce	States and Territories to report against improvement indicators for the annual report on the Strategy	Mid-term review and monitoring

Seven

How will the Success of the Strategy be Determined?

Key Performance Indicators

Improvements to data collection in VET are occurring through implementation of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) which offers a nationally consistent standard for the collection and analysis of vocational education and training information in Australia. This data can be used to track significant changes in the participation of women in VET programs.

The outcomes of the Strategy are designed to be attainable and measurable. They have been developed with a view to using accessible data as indicators of their achievement. The Australian National Training Authority will provide funds through the Australian Committee for Vocational Education and Training Statistics to develop Equity Key Performance Measures. Performance Indicators for the Strategy and their use will be influenced by changes to performance indicators for the overall VET sector.

Outcome	Indicator
Increase in the number of women completing VET programs	• Module results • Module completions
Increase in number of women with VET qualifications at all levels	• Course enrolments by qualification • Course enrolments by stream
Women distributed more broadly across fields of study	• Course enrolments by stream • Course enrolments by field of study • Course enrolments by discipline group
Increase in participation and improved outcomes for specific groups of women	All above indicators disaggregated on the basis of gender, age, country of birth, language spoken at home, disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, geographic region, employment status
Higher number of women in management positions	• Destination surveys • Labour market analysis
Broader distribution of women across industries at various levels	• Course enrolments by field of study • Course enrolments by discipline group • Destination surveys • Labour market analysis

Movements in these patterns at state, territory and national levels will be monitored by the VEET Women's Taskforce.

Indicators of Improvement

The statistical information will provide a broad indication of progress. Some qualitative information is required regarding the incremental progress of States and Territories. As part of its action plan each State and Territory will develop a set of 'improvement indicators'. The indicators will reflect the priorities of the states and should specify the degree of improvement. These indicators can be a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. This may include benchmarking, best practice, audit processing and client satisfaction surveys. The mid-term review of the Strategy will report on the Indicators of Improvement.

Examples of Indicators of Improvement:

- improved consultation processes with specific groups of women regarding optimum type of training delivery;
- staff development provided to women to improve skills of representation;
- effective avenues for distributing information to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about VET identified;
- women well represented in courses related to the state's growth industries;
- women well represented on boards, decision making bodies.

Reporting Processes

Progress will be reported in three ways.

1. An annual published report prepared by the VEET Women's Taskforce. Each state will be required to report against its 'improvement indicators' and this will form the basis of the report.
2. The Annual Report published by ANTA will outline the work of its councils and committees in contributing to the success of the Strategy. It will also refer to the work outlined in the detailed Strategy Report.
3. State Training Agencies will identify their priorities and plans for implementing the Strategy and linking this to benchmarks and goals, in their State Training Profiles. State Training Profiles are intended to provide a single and comprehensive plan for the provision and support of vocational education and training for the immediate year ahead and indicative estimates for the following two years. Groups such as ITABs and VET providers that provide input to the State Training Profile will comment on progress towards the achievement of outcomes in the Strategy.

In addition, information from state ITABs will be incorporated into national industry VET plans prepared by National ITABs. Providers will report on the Strategy through their performance agreements and contracts.

Communication and coordination between states will occur through regular forums to ensure duplication of effort is minimised. This will be facilitated by the VEET Women's Taskforce.

A mid-term review will be undertaken 18 months from endorsement of the Strategy. The review will seek evidence of activity but will not measure statistical progress towards outcomes. It will report on the State and Territory indicators of improvement.

The review will focus on necessary adjustments to outcomes, priorities and mechanisms. It will respond to changes in the VET sector that have occurred since endorsement and indicate areas for research. The mid-term review will be the responsibility of the VEET Women's Taskforce.

A final evaluation of the Strategy will be undertaken in 1999 to determine the degree of success in achieving outcomes. An appropriate methodology will be developed to test the effectiveness of the model and the mechanisms that were used. An assessment of the priorities will analyse the degree to which they provided a useful focus and the degree to which change was achieved.

The final evaluation will make recommendations on appropriate future action.

GLOSSARY

ANTA	—	Australian National Training Authority
AVTS	—	Australian Vocational Training System
ITAB	—	Industry Training Advisory Board / Body
MCEETYA	—	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs
NESB	—	Non-English speaking background
NSDC	—	National Staff Development Committee
RPL	—	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCC	—	Standards and Curriculum Council
VEET	—	Vocational Education Employment and Training
VET	—	Vocational Education and Training